

THE POLITICS OF THE PULL REQUEST: HOW OPEN STANDARDS CAN SHIFT POWER



INTERACTING



Beee

OPEN SOURCE IS...



OPEN SOURCE IS...

What if open source isn't about
collaborating on code,
but **A TOOL AGAINST ASYMMETRY ?**



Diversifying Open Source

An Open Standards Playbook for Inclusive and Equitable Tech Projects

Open Source started as a way to legally guarantee the ability to copy, modify and distribute software. Today it is the basis for a rapidly developing billion-dollar industry that uses the power of collective work to achieve its goals. Open Source has become a complex ecosystem based on collaboration and remix.

This playbook argues that by using open standards, a tech project improves its quality and shareability, since such standards exist to foster better communication between creators and consumers of the framework or tool. Most importantly, open standards guide technology development by gently enforcing more diverse and equitable spaces.

Diversifying Open Source will start by looking at the different faces of open source; unravelling diversity and labor issues for open source communities, and understanding open standards: what they are and how they can be used in tech projects by providing blueprints and examples and to propose a more accessible, balanced and maintainable ecosystem.

What You Will Learn

- Understand what 'open source' actually, how its used and means and current issues
- Learn what standards are and how they form the basis for governance and best practices for Open Source projects
- Learn the necessity and value of DEI within the tech environment
- Explore how to implement standards for open source projects



Paloma Oliveira is a technologist examining the socio-ethical implications of technology. With roots in community organizing and governance roles across open source foundations, she advocates for gender equity, accessibility, and the principles of free and open-source culture as essential forces for a more just and inclusive world to leave no one behind.

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Diversifying Open Source

An Open Standards Playbook
for Inclusive and Equitable Tech
Projects

—
Paloma Oliveira

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The technologies we
create don't just do
things,

THEY SHAPE THINGS
communities, access,
power, identities.





TECHNOLOGY'S BIAS & THE ILLUSION OF OPENNESS

Invisible by default
A meritocracy trap

OPEN TO WHO?



When the world is designed around an ‘average man,’ women become invisible.
Technology that’s supposed to protect us ends up harming half the population.

Open source can fall into the same trap—if **our standards and governance only reflect those already in the room,** we risk building systems that **quietly exclude everyone** else.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Transit systems are often designed for the “average commuter”: someone going from

home → work → home

But women are more likely to make multiple shorter “trip chains” (school drop-offs, elder care, groceries). When planners ignore this, routes and schedules serve men better, while women face longer, more complex commutes.

When only one pattern of use is considered, others are made invisible.

In open source, **if we only design for a linear, full-time, single-contributor model, we erase the realities** of those balancing care, work, or other forms of labor.

INVISIBLE WOMAN, CAROLINE CRIADO PEREZ



This is the **myth of meritocracy**: it **pretends to reward talent and effort, but in reality it bakes in privilege.**

Open source does the same if we only count code commits as merit.

Who has the time, the financial security, the freedom to make thousands of unpaid contributions? **If we don't question what we reward, we replicate inequality under the banner of fairness.**

A NEW ARISTOCRACY

Elite education and jobs are hoarded by the wealthiest families. They can afford the best schools, test prep, unpaid internships, and networks that pass opportunity down like inheritance.

The result: a **closed loop**, where the “winners” of meritocracy are overwhelmingly the children of those who already won before.

He calls this the **new aristocracy**: not based on noble birth titles, but on access to elite education and professional tracks that are effectively inaccessible to outsiders.

The very people locked out of elite pipelines are also locked out of shaping technology.

Tech becomes part of the exclusion, reproducing the same aristocracy under the guise of openness.

THE MERITOCRACY TRAP, DANIEL MARKOVITS

An illustration of four hands of different skin tones (brown, tan, and two shades of brown) pulling on a piece of fabric. The fabric is composed of several overlapping, curved shapes in various colors: red, pink, yellow, and dark blue. The background is a solid purple color. The hands are positioned at the corners of the frame, pulling the fabric towards the center.

HOW POWER FLOWS IN OPEN SOURCE (BY DESIGN)

VSD Shaping Technology with Moral Imagination

Who's in the room?

Doing what?

Who is being affected?

Open by Design

Open by default means setting standards that make equity the default, not the exception.

Design approach that integrates **human values (equity, inclusion, justice)** into technology from the start, not as an afterthought.

VALUE SENSITIVE DESIGN

Identifies **stakeholders** (not just users, but those affected).

Surfaces **values in tension** (efficiency vs. accessibility, speed vs. fairness).

Embeds these values into **technical + governance decisions**.

Uses iteration: designs are tested not only for function, but for **impact on people**.

Moves projects from “anyone can join” → “everyone can belong.”

Makes invisible contributions (docs, community care) **visible and valued**.

Ensures standards (CoCs, governance, contribution guides) act as **tools of equity**, not gatekeeping.

VALUE SENSITIVE DESIGN: SHAPING TECHNOLOGY WITH MORAL IMAGINATION, BATYA FRIEDMAN AND DANIEL G. HENDRY

SHIFTING POWER WITH STANDARDS

“GENTLE ENFORCEMENT”

An abstract background featuring a yellow field with large, flowing purple and blue shapes. Two hands, rendered in a stylized, blocky manner with blue and orange tones, are shown. One hand is at the top right, holding a red and white striped flag. The other hand is at the bottom left, holding a thin orange line that extends diagonally across the frame. A large orange triangle is positioned in the bottom right, and a blue circle with a red center is on the right side.

Standards as tools

Docs and governance quietly shape who belongs

Every pull request = whose voice gets merged

Whose voices are missing?

SPACES OF AND FOR LIBERATION

An illustration of two hands, one at the top right and one at the bottom right, holding a red string. The string runs diagonally across the image. The background is a solid purple color with abstract shapes in pink and yellow on the left side.

PyLadies

Feminist AI Lan Party

Spaces of freedom, consciousness, and care

SUSTAINING THE COMMONS INFRASTRUCTURE

An illustration featuring two dark-skinned hands, one in the upper right and one in the lower left, weaving yellow threads into a network. The threads cross and loop, forming a web-like structure. The background is a solid purple color, and there are large, abstract yellow shapes on the right side. The text is overlaid on this background.

OPEN SOURCE AS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Sovereign Tech
Agency**

An illustration on a solid purple background. Three hands are shown: a black hand at the top left, a brown hand at the top right, and an orange hand at the bottom left. They are pulling on white strings that converge at a central point. These strings are attached to a large, yellow, abstract shape that resembles a splash or a stylized animal. The shape has several rounded, protruding sections. The text 'WHAT WORLD IS YOUR PROJECT MAKING POSSIBLE?' is centered over the yellow shape. The word 'YOUR' is in red, while the other words are in white.

**WHAT WORLD IS YOUR PROJECT
MAKING POSSIBLE?**

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